MAUDGALYA RḤṢI

& THE MAUDGALYA GOTRA

A Deep Dive Research Report

Antecedents · Lineage · Vedic Legacy · Sacred Texts · Geographic Migration

> *"From Mudgala came a dynasty of Brāhmaṇas known as Maudgalya."*
>
> — Bhāgavata Purāṇa, S.B. 9.21.31–33

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I. The Progenitor: Rishi Mudgala (Maudgalya)

Identity & Names

Mudgala (Sanskrit: मुद्गल), also rendered Maudgalya (Sanskrit: मौद्गल्य), is a revered Ṛṣi (sage) in Hinduism. The name *Maudgalya* is a patronymic/gotronym of *Mudgala*, meaning "descendant of or belonging to the line of Mudgala." The Maudgalya Brāhmaṇas claim their direct descent from this sage.

Rājarṣi Status

Mudgala is classified as a **Rājarṣi** (राजर्षि) — sages who were originally born as Kṣatriya (warrior) kings and led royal lives before attaining spiritual transcendence through tapasyā. Through severe austerity and meditation, Mudgala cultivated inner equanimity and purity of mind, receiving *Brahmatva* — a state of spiritual realization beyond varṇa distinctions. This places him in the same tradition as Viśvāmitra.

Key Epithets

Epithet	Sanskrit	Meaning
Mudgala	मुद्गल	The progenitor's original name
Maudgalya	मौद्गल्य	Of or belonging to Mudgala's lineage
Rājarṣi	राजर्षि	Royal sage; Kṣatriya who attained Ṛṣi status
Unchavṛtti	उञ्छवृत्ति	One who subsists by gleaning scattered grain
Mahātapas	महातपस्	One of mighty austerities

II. Dynastic & Genealogical Antecedents

Royal Origins in the Pañcāla Dynasty

Mudgala was an ancient king of Pañcāla, son of King Bharmyāśva. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa (S.B. 9.21.31–33) records the precise genealogical chain:

> *"The son of Śānti was Suśānti, the son of Suśānti was Puruja, and the son of Puruja was Arka. From Arka came Bharmyāśva, and from Bharmyāśva came five sons — Mudgala, Yavīnara, Bṛhadviśva, Kāmpilla and Sañjaya. From Mudgala came a dynasty of Brāhmaṇas known as Maudgalya."*
>
> — Bhāgavata Purāṇa, S.B. 9.21.31–33

Complete Family of Mudgala

Relationship	Name	Notes
Father	King Bharmyāśva	King of Pañcāla; son of Arka in the Lunar Dynasty
Mother	Unknown Queen	Name unrecorded in all surviving scriptures
Wife	Nalāyanī / Indrasenā	Daughter of King Nala & Queen Damayantī; reborn as Draupadī
Father-in-law	King Nala	King of Niṣādha; hero of Nalopaakhyāna (Mahābhārata)
Mother-in-law	Queen Damayantī	Renowned for her svayaṃvara choosing Nala over the Devas
Brother	Yavīnara	One of the five Pañcālas; ruled a Pañcāla region
Brother	Bṛhadviśva	One of the five Pañcālas
Brother	Kāmpilla	One of the five Pañcālas
Brother	Sañjaya	One of the five Pañcālas
Son	Maudgalya	Founded the Brāhmaṇa lineage — the Maudgalya Gotra
Son	Vadhryāśva	Continued the Kṣatriya royal line of Pañcāla
Son	Divodāsa	Mentioned in Purāṇic texts
Daughter	Ahalyā	Married Sage Gautama; central to the Rāmāyaṇa (Bāla Kāṇḍa)

The Varṇa Transition: Kṣatriya to Brāhmaṇa

Mudgala's lineage embodies a dynastic varṇa transition. His son **Maudgalya** founded the Brāhmaṇa line while **Vadhryāśva** continued the Kṣatriya royal lineage. This illustrates the celebrated Purāṇic theme of *guṇa* (quality) and *karma* (action) superseding birth, as seen also in Viśvāmitra's journey from Kṣatriya to Brahmarṣi.

III. Mudgala’s Place in the Cosmic Gotra Lineage

Root Ancestry: The Āṅgirasa Connection

The Maudgalya Gotra is embedded within the vast **Āṅgirasa** (आङ्गिरस) family of Gotras — one of the eight primordial Gotrakārins. Aṅgirasa Maharśi was one of the seven Saptarśis of the first Manvantara alongside Atri, Kratu, Marīci, Pulaha, Pulastya, and Vasiṣṭha. The sixth Maṇḍala of the Ṛgveda was formulated by Aṅgirasa and his descendants. **Maudgalya (Mowdgalya)** is a recognised member of this extended Āṅgirasa clan.

What is a Gotra?

The word *Gotra* derives from Sanskrit *Gau* (गौ — cow) and *Trahi* (त्रहि — shed). A Gotra is a patrilineal clan identity — analogous to a Y-chromosome lineage in modern genetics. Marriage within the same Gotra (*sagotra vivāha*) is strictly prohibited in Hindu dharmaśāstra.

The Eight Gotrakārins

Gotrakārin Ṛṣi	Sanskrit	Notable Sub-Gotras
Aṅgirasa	अङ्गिरस	Maudgalya, Bhāradvāja, Gautama, Garga, Hārita, Kāṇva
Atri	अत्रि	Ātreyasa and related Gotras
Viśvāmitra	विश्वामित्र	Kauśika and related Gotras
Kaśyapa	कश्यप	Widely spread across Brāhmaṇa communities
Bharadvāja	भरद्वाज	Sub-branch of Āṅgirasa
Vasiṣṭha	वसिष्ठ	Vasiṣṭhasa and related
Jamadagni	जमदग्नि	Bhārgava branch
Gautama	गौतम	Sub-branch of Āṅgirasa

IV. Sacred Texts & Literary Antecedents

In the Ṛgveda

Sage Mudgala is the Ṛṣi credited with pronouncing **Ṛg Veda Sūkta 10/102**. His wife was known as *Mudgalānī*. He practiced severe Tapas at the holy site of **Kurukṣetra** and was a great devotee of Lord Viṣṇu and his avatāra Lord Rāma.

In the Mahābhārata — Vana Parva (Adhyāyas 258–261)

Mudgala lived in Kurukṣetra and observed the *Unchavṛtti* (उञ्छवृत्ति) mode — surviving by gleaning grain left scattered in fields after harvest. Despite this austere poverty, he performed the *Iṣṭkṛta* sacrifice and received divine blessings.

> *"There lived, O king, in Kurukṣetra a virtuous man, Mudgala by name. He was truthful, free from malice, and of subdued senses. He used to lead the Śila and Unchha modes of life. Although living like a pigeon, yet that one of mighty austerities entertained his guests, celebrated the sacrifice called Iṣṭkṛta, and performed other rites."*
>
> — Mahābhārata, Vana Parva, Adhyāya 258

The Test of Durvāsā — Six Seasons

Sage **Durvāsā** arrived at Mudgala's āśrama in digambara (naked) form and consumed all available food, smearing the remainder on his body. This was repeated six successive times. Each time, Mudgala — though left starving — displayed not the slightest anger. Pleased, Durvāsā declared Mudgala free of the eight defects (*aṣṭa doṣas*) and offered him ascent to Svarga in his physical body.

Refusing Svarga — Supreme Vairāgya

A celestial messenger arrived with a divine vimāna. Uniquely, Mudgala enquired about heaven's defects before accepting. On learning that heavenly enjoyment ends when merit is exhausted — causing a painful return to earth — Mudgala refused:

> *"O messenger of the gods, I bow unto thee. I have nothing to do with either happiness or heaven having such prominent defects. I shall seek for that unfailing region, repairing whither people have not to lament, or to be pained, or agitated."*
>
> — Mahābhārata, Vana Parva, Adhyāya 261

The messenger then described **Viṣṇu Loka** — the supreme eternal abode. Mudgala attained equanimity where praise and criticism, gold and a brickbat became equal, and engaged entirely in meditation to attain *Parama Padam*.

The Mudgala Upaniṣad

One of the 108 Upaniṣads, the **Mudgala Upaniṣad** is attached to the Ṛgveda. It provides a detailed exegesis of the *Puruṣa Sūkta*, exploring the cosmic Puruṣa as the supreme reality, themes of creation (*sṛṣṭi*), preservation (*sthiti*), dissolution (*laya*), the supreme Self (Ātman), and liberation (*mokṣa*) through knowledge. It is foundational to Vaiṣṇavism.

The Mudgala Purāṇa

A foundational **Gāṇapatya** scripture, the Mudgala Purāṇa depicts Gaṇeśa as the ultimate Brahman and details his avatāras to overcome human vices. It integrates Tāntric and Vedic elements to elevate Gaṇeśa-centric devotion, influencing the entire Gāṇapatya sect.

V. The Maudgalya Gotra: Structure & Pravara

The Pravara System

The **Pravara** (प्रवर — "most excellent") is the invocation of a lineage's most illustrious ancestral Ṛṣis, recited at sacred rituals. The Baudhayana Śrauta Sūtra (c. 600 BCE) is the earliest text listing pravara-Ṛṣis for 91 Gotras. Two persons sharing even one pravara-Ṛṣi are considered cognates and may not intermarry. The Maudgalya Gotra pravara traces back through the Āṅgirasa lineage.

Vedic Affiliation & Calendar Tradition

Mudgalas were originally **Ṛgvedís**. As the community migrated southward, they adopted the **Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda**. This created a unique calendrical tradition:

Occasion	Calendar Used	Basis
Birthdays (Janma Nakṣatra)	Chandramāna (Lunar)	Nakṣatra in the solar month of birth
Śrāddham (Death Anniversary)	Lunar Tithī	Tithī of the lunar month of death
Other Kṛṣṇa Yajur Vedís	Sauramāna (Solar)	Follow solar calendar exclusively

This unique Chandramāna adherence among Maudgalyas — while all other Kṛṣṇa Yajur Vedís use the solar calendar — is a living marker of their Ṛgvedic origins.

VI. Geographic Spread & Migration

The migration of the Maudgalya community across the subcontinent can be traced through linguistic, ritual, and genealogical evidence. The probable migration route is:

Region	Significance
Baluchistan	Northwestern starting point; proto-Vedic settlements of the Indus-Sarasvatī civilisation
Punjab	Early Vedic heartland; era of Ṛgvedic composition; original Ṛgvedic affiliation maintained
Kashmir	Northern mountain corridor; important staging point in eastward movement
Oḍiśā (Orissa)	Eastern coastal transition; shift from northern to Deccan cultural sphere
Āndhra Pradesh	Deccan establishment; adoption of Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda tradition
Tamil Nāḍu & Kerala	Final southward settlement; integration into Smārta, Iyer, and Śrī Vaiṣṇava traditions

This explains why Maudgalya Gotra is found across both **North Indian** communities (Gaur/Gauḍa Brāhmaṇas, Sārasvata Brāhmaṇas) and **South Indian** communities (Iyer, Smārta, Śrī Vaiṣṇava families), with distinct regional sub-traditions reflecting their separate migratory histories.

VII. Key Attributes & Spiritual Legacy

Vairāgya (वैराग्य — Detachment): Supreme detachment from worldly pleasures — embodied by refusing Svarga (heaven) itself upon learning of its transient nature.

Kṣamā (क्षमा — Patience & Forbearance): Six tests by the volatile sage Durvāsā — consumption of all food, deliberate besmearing of leftovers — met with absolute equanimity. No anger, no complaint.

Dāna (दान — Charity & Hospitality): Gave all available food to guests even while subsisting on gleaned grain. Indra and the Devas personally appeared at his Iṣṭkṛta sacrifices.

Karma Yoga (कर्मयोग): Performed all duties without attachment to fruits — a living embodiment of the Bhagavad Gītā's central teaching centuries before its composition.

Yogi-Householder Model: Demonstrated that mokṣa is not confined to renunciants. A gṛhastha (householder) can attain liberation through inner detachment while fulfilling worldly duties.

Preservation of Vedic Knowledge: Listed as a qualified transmitter of Vedic Saṃhitās in the Vyāsa param'parā (Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Canto 12).

Notable Descendants

Among the most celebrated modern bearers of the Maudgalya Gotra is **Sengalipuram Anantarama Dīkṣithar**, honoured as *Upanyāsa Cakravarthy* (Emperor of Discourses). His profound discourses on the Rāmāyaṇa, Bhāgavatam, and Mahābhārata shaped the spiritual lives of generations across South India.

VIII. Family Tree Diagram

Complete known lineage of Ṛṣi Mudgala — from cosmic Āṅgirasa ancestry through the Pañcāla dynasty to his immediate family and the children who carried his legacy forward. Based on Bhāgavata Purāṇa S.B. 9.21.31–33, Mahābhārata, and Purāṇic sources.

Maudgalya Ṛṣi — Sacred Family Tree & Lineage

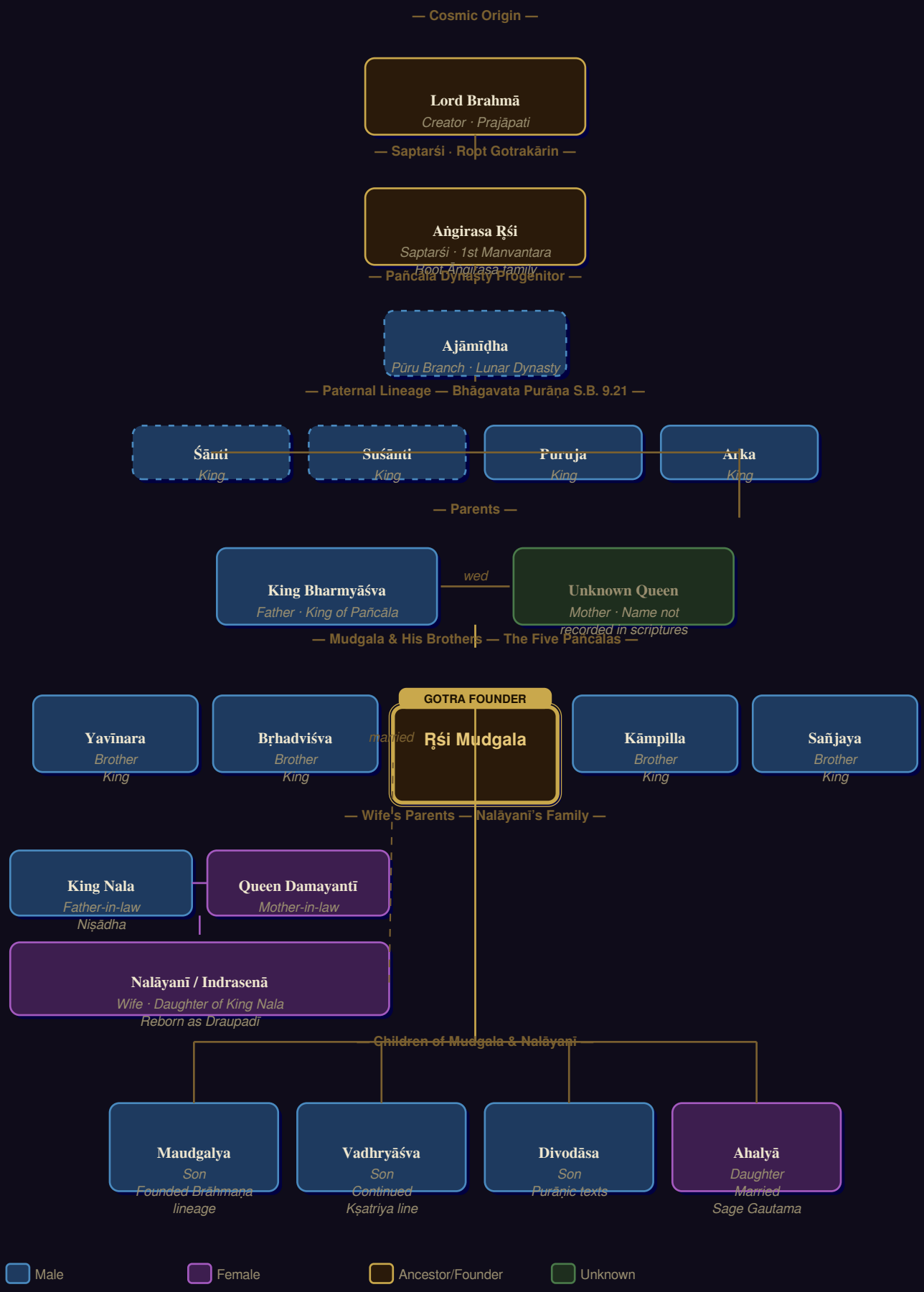

Figure 1: Complete family tree of Ṛṣi Mudgala / Maudgalya.

IX. Summary Reference Table

Dimension	Detail
Founder-Ṛṣi	Mudgala / Maudgalya (मुद्गल / मौद्गल्य)
Classification	Rājarṣi — Kṣatriya origin; attained Brahmatva through tapasyā
Father	King Bharmyāśva of Pañcāla (son of Arka)
Mother	Unknown — name unrecorded in all surviving scriptures
Wife	Nalāyanī / Indrasenā — daughter of King Nala & Queen Damayantī; reborn as Draupadī
Brothers	Yavīnara, Bṛhadviśva, Kāmpilla, Sañjaya — The Five Pañcālas
Sons	Maudgalya (Brāhmaṇa lineage), Vadhryāśva (Kṣatriya lineage), Divodāsa
Daughter	Ahalyā — married Sage Gautama; central to Rāmāyaṇa (Bāla Kāṇḍa)
Root Gotra Family	Āṅgirasa (one of the 8 primordial Gotrakārins)
Vedic Affiliation	Originally Ṛgveda; shifted to Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda in South India
Calendar Tradition	Chandramāna: birthdays by solar nakṣatra; Śrāddham by lunar tithī
Scriptures Authored	Ṛg Veda Sūkta 10/102; Mudgala Upaniṣad; Mudgala Purāṇa
Epic References	Mahābhārata — Vana Parva Adh. 258–261; Ādī Parva Adh. 53
Purāṇic References	Bhāgavata Purāṇa S.B. 9.21.31–33; Canto 12, Ch. 6, V. 57
Core Virtues	Vairāgya, Dāna, Kṣamā, Karma Yoga, Dharma
Migration Route	Baluchistan → Punjab → Kashmir → Oḍiśā → Āndhra → Tamil Nāḍu & Kerala
Present Distribution	Gaur/Gauḍa Brāhmaṇas, Sārasvata Brāhmaṇas, Iyer, Smārta, Śrī Vaiṣṇava communities

Sources: Bhāgavata Purāṇa · Mahābhārata (Vana Parva & Ādī Parva) · Ṛgveda · Mudgala Upaniṣad · Mudgala Purāṇa · Baudhayana Śrauta Sūtra · Viṣṇu Purāṇa · Scholarly works on Vedic Gotra lineages.